

SOLIDARITY FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Paper of the Solidarity National Group

No. 1.



15_P

Anarchism and feminism.

Official secrets. Pub bars gays.
Highlands Fabricators strike. Italy.

SOLIDARITY

Solidarity for social revolution is the new paper of the Solidarity National Group. In December 1977 the 2 groups Solidarity and Social Revolution merged, and this paper comes from a fusion of the 2 papers Solidarity for self-management and Social Revolution. The paper will be produced approximately every 2 months. We welcome contributions and letters - for the next issue please send them to Solidarity, Box 23, c/o 163 King St., Aberdeen. To maximise involvement and democracy the editing and lay-out of Solidarity for social revolution will be rotated round different local editorial groups. This issue was produced in January 1978 by Solidarity members in Scotland. While the contents of the paper generally reflect the politics of Solidarity articles signed by individuals don't necessarily represent the views of all members.

FUSION!



Solidarity and Social Revolution have merged, the new group retaining the name Solidarity. The last conference in London in October 1977 the fusion was discussed in detail, and though this did not make for an entertaining weekend we were eventually able to reach agreement on the basis of the new group. Solidarity's 'As We See It' statement has been amended by the inclusion of a new enlarged 'Point 6' (see below) and by the re-wording of 'Point 5' (to remove sexist language). A new 'Point 6' has also been added to the longer 'As We Don't See It' statement. A report by a joint working group on the new paper was agreed upon - Solidarity for social revolution is to come out every 2 months, with production rotated round different editorial groups. Prolonged discussion over the organisational structure of the new group has seen us getting more and more tied up in knots. To save our sanity we decided to fuse on the basis of Solidarity's present organisational structure, and to refer the whole matter to a new working group who would make recommendations to a future conference. We should not leave the report on the October conference without thanking Clapperclaw, the socialist and feminist folk group, for the excellent entertainment they provided at the social.

In December 1977 separate ballots of all members of Solidarity and Social Revolution were held to vote on the conference's recommendation that the 2 groups fuse on the basis of the new 'As We See It' and the report of the paper working group. Members of both groups voted by decisive majorities in favour of the fusion. We hope and believe that the increased resources the fusion will bring will enable us to make a greater contribution to the struggle to create a libertarian socialist society.

AS WE SEE IT

Following is the new amended version of the basic statement of Solidarity's politics:

1. Throughout the world, the vast majority of people have no control whatsoever over the decisions that most deeply and directly affect their lives. They sell their labour power while others who own or control the means of production accumulate wealth, make the laws and use the whole machinery of the State to perpetuate and reinforce their privileged positions.

2. During the past century the living standards of working people have improved. But neither these improved living standards, nor the nationalisation of the means of production, nor the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class have basically altered the status of the worker as worker. Nor have they given the bulk of humanity much freedom outside of production. East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work, and manipulated in consumption and leisure. Propaganda and police, prisons and schools, traditional values and traditional morality all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or coerce the many into acceptance of a brutal, degrading and irrational system. The 'Communist' world is not communist and the 'Free' world is not free.

3. The trade unions and the traditional parties of the left started in business to change all this. But they have come to terms with the existing pattern of exploitation. In fact they are now essential if exploiting society is to continue working smoothly. The unions act as middlemen in the labour market. The political parties use the struggles and aspirations of the working class for their own ends. The degeneration of working class organisations, itself the result of the failure of the revolutionary movement, has been a major factor in creating working class apathy, which in turn has led to the further degeneration of both parties and unions.

4. The trade unions and political parties cannot be reformed, 'captured', or converted into instruments of working class emancipation. We don't call however for the proclamation of new unions, which in the conditions of today would suffer a similar fate to the old ones. Nor do we call for militants to tear up their union cards. Our aims are simply that the workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles and that the control and organization of these struggles should remain firmly in their own hands. The forms which this self-activity of the working class may take will vary considerably from country to country and from industry to industry. Its basic content will not.

5. Socialism is not just the common ownership and control of the means of production and distribution. It means equality, real freedom, reciprocal recognition and a radical transformation in all human relations. It is 'man's positive self-consciousness'. It is people's understanding of their environment and of themselves, their domination over their work and over such social institutions as they may need to create. These are not secondary aspects, which will automatically follow the expropriation of the old ruling class. On the contrary they are essential parts of the whole process of social transformation, for without them no genuine social transformation will have taken place.

6. A socialist society can therefore only be built from below. Decisions concerning production and work will be taken by workers' councils composed of elected and revocable delegates. Decisions in other areas will be taken on the basis of the widest possible discussion and consultation among the people as a whole. This democratisation of society down to its very roots is what we mean by 'workers' power'.

Self-managed institutions and collectivities will be the living framework of a free society. There can be no socialism without self-management. Yet a socialist society made up of individual self-managed units is not, of itself, socialist. Such societies could remain oppressive, unequal and unjust. They could be sexist or racist, could restrict access to knowledge or adopt uncritical attitudes towards 'expertise'. We can imagine the individual units of such a society - of whatever size or complexity (from chicken farms to continental) - competing as 'collective capitalists'. Such competition could only perpetuate alienation and create new inequalities based on new divisions of labour.

Genuine freedom will only be possible when our lives are no longer the object of economic, cultural and political forces which

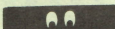
we experience as external to ourselves, and which constantly tend to regenerate capitalist or authoritarian social relations. A socialist society would therefore abolish not only social classes, hierarchies and other structures of domination, but also wage-labour and production for the purpose of sale or exchange on the market. To fulfill their needs and desires people would live and work in free co-operation. The national frontiers of armed states would be replaced by a democratic human community, on a world scale. The elimination of competition (and the decay of competitive attitudes) would have profound social effects which we can hardly imagine today.

7. Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the egalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever re-inforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even by those allegedly acting on their behalf.

8. No ruling class in history has ever relinquished its power without a struggle and our present rulers are unlikely to be an exception. Power will only be taken from them through the conscious, autonomous action of the vast majority of the people themselves. The building of socialism will require mass understanding and mass participation. By their rigid hierarchical structure, by their ideas and by their activities, both social-democratic and bolshevik types of organisations discourage this kind of understanding and prevent this kind of participation. The idea that socialism can somehow be achieved by an elite party (however 'revolutionary') acting 'on behalf of' the working class is both absurd and reactionary.

9. We do not accept the view that by itself the working class can only achieve a trade union consciousness. On the contrary we believe that its conditions of life and its experiences in production constantly drive the working class to adopt priorities and values and to find methods of organisation which challenge the established social order and established patterns of thought. These responses are implicitly socialist. On the other hand, the working class is fragmented, dispossessed of the means of communication, and its various sections are at different levels of awareness and consciousness. The task of the revolutionary organisation is to help give proletarian consciousness an explicitly socialist content, to give practical assistance to workers in struggle and to help those in different areas to exchange experiences and link up with one another.

10. We do not see ourselves as yet another leadership, but merely as an instrument for working class action. The function of SOLIDARITY is to help all those who are in conflict with the present authoritarian social structure, both in industry and in society at large, to generalise their experience, to make a total critique of their condition and of its causes, and to develop the mass revolutionary consciousness necessary if society is to be totally transformed.



Oxford's Iranian connection

Wadham College, Oxford, has recently opened a new library - and a very fine building it is too. The trouble is that the library was partly paid for by a donation of £400,000 from Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, twin sister of the Shah of Iran, and has been named the Ashraf Pahlavi Library.

Ashraf Pahlavi is a part-time heroin smuggler and full-time murderer. In Europe she has twice been arrested at airports with a load of heroin in her suitcase, only to be released because of diplomatic pressure from Iran. In Iran she is reputed to have had a journalist who criticized her burned to death in front of her, and whether this particular story is true or not, it is certain that, as a leading figure in one of the cruelest and most repressive regimes in the world, she is responsible for the imprisonment, torture, and murder of many thousands of opponents.

The Iranian dictatorship is very keen to create a favourable image in Western Europe and the USA, and the donation to Wadham was no doubt expected to be an important source of prestige. The scheme backfired, however, thanks to the efforts of the Iranian student movement in Britain, and students at Wadham and other Oxford colleges. When the Princess visited Wadham in June 1976, she was greeted by an angry demonstration. Her bodyguards received some rough handling, and Ashraf herself had to be smuggled into the college through a back door.

The Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI) and Wadham Students' Union are campaigning to have the library renamed after Samad Behranghi - an Iranian author who was murdered by the dictatorship - and to have a section of the library given over to Persian books banned by the regime. A mass picket of the College was held on 29th November, in which about 150 people took part. Much to the annoyance of the College authorities, books keep appearing on the library shelves neatly labelled "Samad Library".

The goal of this campaign - changing the name of the library - is symbolic in nature, but its real value lies in spoiling the prestige

(Contd. at bottom of next column)

SHORTS

Launderette liberation



Posters and pendants proclaim: "It isn't fair! Sign our petition!" Sure thing, but where's the petition? "Launderette Users Action Committee: you are being forced to pay twice!" So! At last, the launderetting masses are rising up - against machines breaking down in the middle of the wash, against the shortage of clothes baskets, against paying through the nose for a basic human right!

But, dozy though you are, you start to notice strange facts. How come these beautifully printed posters haven't been torn down? (They're displayed in the windows of launderettes all over London.) And how are you supposed to get in on the action when the Action Committee has no address or phone number? And what's the protest about?

It seems that the Water Authorities are making the launderette owners pay specially for the treatment of their waste water. So you are paying twice: once through the rates, and again through these special charges - which, unfortunately, will have to be passed on in increased prices. The new 35p slot slides are being fitted next month, and they won't break down.

LUAC has no address, but there's a small notice that does have one: LOLA, Launderette Owners London Association.

What about this special treatment of waste water? Perhaps the recent campaign by garage owners' against private car washing gives us a clue. They claimed it was better for the environment to have your car washed by a garage, because of the special treatment of garages' waste water. But what treatment and how?

It's we who get the treatment. The detergent just goes down the drain.

The posters have disappeared. But we're confident the struggle will be taken up again, stronger than ever!

that the Shah's regime hoped to gain from the donation, and making more people in Britain aware of the extremes of poverty, repression, and state brutality that exist in Iran today, and of the need to support the workers, peasants, and students of Iran in their struggle.

D.A.

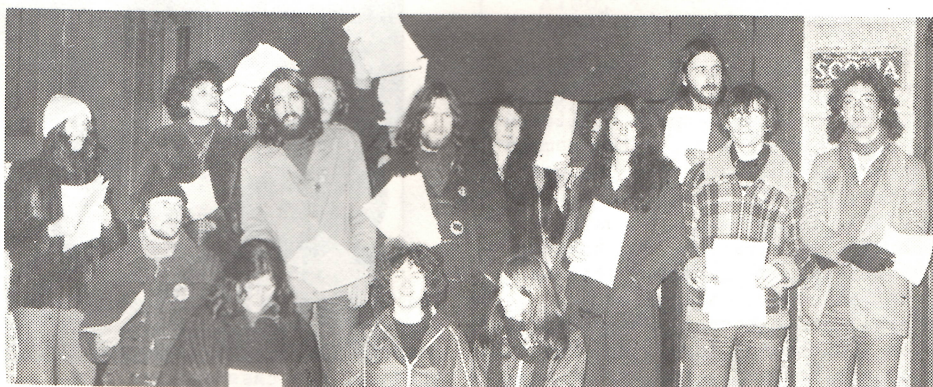
Scotia bars gays

On Friday 2nd December six people went for a drink in the Scotia Lounge in Aberdeen: when two of them went up to the bar, they were told they wouldn't be served: the owner told them, "We don't want you here. Go elsewhere." Reasons given (to the newspapers) were that the six had been "cheeky, blatantly using bad language and making unkind remarks about other customers". Since these accusations were untrue, the six people and their friends decided the real reason for the ban was that five of those banned are homosexual and wear gay badges: sympathisers with those banned talked to the owner "off the record" and he confirmed this.

Many people living and working in the area immediately stopped using the Scotia and several also made their feelings known to the owner. In mid-December a meeting was organised by the six people who'd been banned, at the suggestion of the local Libertarian

of trying to find out who was "bent" and saying how being gay was "unnatural", one of the men suddenly stuffed a leaflet down one woman's T-shirt, grabbed a handful of leaflets from another and hit one of the men in the face. When he tried to pull the man off, a fourth person was butted in the face: he lost two teeth and had his nose broken. The second man butted a woman and punched her in the face. The way the men attacked made us think that was what they were out to do from the start.

The next day (Wednesday) the two men who attacked the leafletters were fined £25 each. That night about twenty people turned up outside the Scotia: we came back to show we hadn't been scared off, and to affirm our opposition to discrimination against gay people and our support for them in the fight against the prejudice and sexism they face if they are openly gay.



Leafletters outside the Scotia pub on the Wednesday night

Socialist Group. The six described what had happened to about 20 supporters. They also told how the two main gay organisations in Aberdeen - the Scottish Minorities Group and the University Gay Society have been less than unanimous in their support: many seemed to accept the Scotia's version of events.

The meeting decided to leaflet regulars at the pub twice a night: we wanted to gain their support.

Leafletting on Monday 19th and early evening on Tuesday 20th went very well: most customers took leaflets and several spoke to the owner against the ban.

Later on Tuesday evening five leafletters had been outside the pub only a few minutes when two men tried to pull them into the bar "to put their case to customers". They stayed outside and the two men followed. After about ten minutes

Next evening a dozen of us were outside the Scotia when the two men arrived with seven mates (all big-looking). We reckon the owner must have been afraid of more trouble (and more bad publicity for his pub) because soon after several loads of police arrived and bluntly told the leafletters to move on or they'd be arrested for disobeying a lawful police order - they moved on.

At the moment the six are still banned and no further action is planned. Most people are resigned to this, but the support from non-gays is encouraging for the future - many won't use the pub again.

The coverage in the local papers wasn't all hostile and might help non-gays in general to realise that gay people exist and many of them are prepared to show they exist, as people and not as the alien oddities some "comedians" would have you believe.

OFFICIAL — the ch SECRETS

It's often difficult to work out where a story begins, but this one probably starts with the publication in London's "Time Out", May 1976, of an article entitled "The Eavesdroppers". The authors were Mark Hosenball and Duncan Campbell, both to become better known.

Campbell was a clever and irreverent young journalist from Dundee, who'd already made waves as an electronics whizz-kid and a phone phreak before turning his insatiable curiosity towards military state communications, which he investigated by carefully piecing together official information and extrapolating. On leaving university he was able to use his talents to find a niche in the expanding group of journalists investigating covert state activities in the wake of Watergate, Poulson, the CIA revelations, etc. Hosenball, an American, was another.

"The Eavesdroppers" (re-printed in Undercurrents 24, still available) concerns the vast network of 'listening posts' which monitor the communications of the world for the west's military Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). In Britain its run from General Communications HQ, Cheltenham, and employs a great multitude to spy on communications both internal and external. The 3 biggest bases (Chicksands, Edzell, and Menwith Hill) are, however, run by the U.S. National Security Agency, and British Intelligence has little or no control over them. This last revelation probably got up someones nose, because things began to happen.

A month later, on June 30th, Winslow Peck, the ex-NSA man who had provided background for the article was turned back at Heathrow. And on November 11th, deportation orders were served on Hosenball and ex-CIA man Philip Agee. A certain low cunning is evident in the way 2 journalists who hardly knew each other were smeared as part of some nebulous conspiracy "prejudicial to the interests of the state". Protests were made, and Agee ran a ferocious campaign, but mud sticks, and the concession of an appeal tribunal gave the usual illusion of "British justice". This of course was a complete whitewash - it consisted of "three wise men" (monkeys?) from the military who would sit and listen to evidence for the defence, and then put the

official seal on the deportations. However the defence might at least find out how the authorities had been offended, by presenting all conceivably relevant evidence, and watching the tribunal's reactions.

The fun began when Campbell explained that he had written most of "The Eavesdroppers" and that all the information had come from legitimate sources. These included telephone directories, which he'd used to locate SIGINT bases, some of which he then phoned to obtain further useful information from staff. The tribunal appeared astonished by these facts, and had them repeated. It looked as though the reason for Hosenball's expulsion



Crispin Aubrey

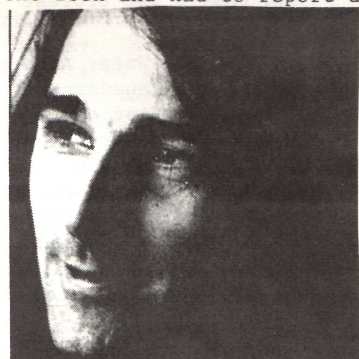
had been found....but Hosenball, along with Agee, was still deported, despite Campbell's apparent demolition of the case against him. Hosenball had already done sterling work exposing the CIA in Britain, so "The Eavesdroppers" might just have been the last straw.

The hearings ended on February 3rd 1977, and on the 8th ITV devoted "World In Action" to the case. Campbell was well to the fore, cheerfully repeating how he'd researched for "The Eavesdroppers", and giving the viewers a demonstration of how to "read" the telephone directory. Meanwhile the Agee-Hosenball Defence Committee was being watched by MI5, an action which involved a number of thefts, including that of the treasurer's records from his car. Among the contacts they discovered John Berry, an ex-army corporal who had worked in SIGINT before quitting in 1970. He contacted the committee expressing deep concern at the state's "paranoid reaction" to Agee and Hosenball, and mentioned NSA's hold over British SIGINT. Thus it was inevitable that he'd meet Campbell, and a meeting between them was arranged for February 18th at Berry's home in North London.

Crispin Aubrey, another journalist, came along too.

MI5 knew all this - they'd been tapping Berry's phone since the 14th - and saw a rare chance to knobble 2 birds with 1 stone. The Special Branch were called, swooped on Berry's flat, and spirited the 3 men off to the local police station, where they were held for 2 days without access to solicitors or friends, who made loud noises outside. They were then given a perfunctory interrogation, charged under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, and put into Brixton Prison where they were kept apart from other prisoners.

Campbell and Aubrey were out on bail in a few days, but Berry was considered so dangerous that it took 3 weeks to get him out. Not that getting out was much of a consolation - they had n't to repeat a word of what they'd said on the 18th and had to report daily



John Berry

to the police. Their flats had been searched; Campbell's place in Brighton had been almost cleaned out of files (including an entire filing cabinet), along with books (but only the first half of the alphabet!), waste paper baskets, and Campbell's secret weapon - his telephone directories. His work as a journalist was made very difficult by this. Special branch followed him around, and harassed acquaintances, including Aubrey/Berry's solicitor and a reporter who had stood bail for Aubrey. These were joined later by various correspondents of Campbell's, who received 'visits', which culminated in the actual arrest of Stephen Wright, a student at Lancaster researching "The Social Implications of Policing and Death Technology". He was released, but a lot of his files were n't.

These Kafkaesque manoeuvres were totally out of proportion to the charges against the 3 men: the maximum penalty under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act is 2 years. This section is the most all-embracing part of a very comprehensive piece of political legislation - under it any transmission of "official information" from a past or

* The NSA is the military equivalent of the CIA

ains begin to tighten

present state employee to an "unauthorised person" is an offence for both of them. "Official information means almost anything official that has n't been cleared for publication - including things like recipes and numbers of paper clips. The Labour Party is actually pledged to repeal Section 2 because of its threat to journalists, and a campaign was based around this embarrassing fact.

It was neatly scuppered on May 24th, when Berry and Campbell were landed new charges under Section I. These specify that "for a purpose prejudicial to the safety or the interests of the state", information was passed "which might be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy" - in other words a charge of spying and one which can lead to 14 years imprisonment. Aubrey's new charge, under Section 7, was "aiding and abetting" the other 2. To underline the apparent dreadfulness of



Duncan Campbell

Campbell's actions, he was presented on August 9th with another charge under Section I, this time with gathering "information about defence communications which might directly or etc. etc."

All that needed to be done was to put them on the 9 month waiting list for the Old Bailey, which was the occasion for an extraordinary 10 day hearing at Tottenham Magistrates Court last November. The main prosecution evidence, a tape the 3 men had made of their conversation back in February, was heard in camera. The defence got their own back when the prosecution tried to call Colonel 'A', a senior Defence person, but refused to let the defence know who he was on the grounds that the defence lawyer had worked for that "unreliable" organisation, the National Council for Civil Liberties. After noisy protests the witness was withdrawn and the NCCL vindicated.

The defence also embarrassed the Special Branch by asking them about phone-tapping (no answer) and some of the strange things they removed from Campbell's flat - including "the Female Eunok" (police spelling). Evidence against Campbell consisted

of correspondence he'd had with various people (including a monk at Ampleforth and one of his pupils) about military communications, implying he'd been up to terribly subversive things, despite the fact that all of his information had come from legitimate sources. The climax was the appearance of Colonel 'B' (a.k.a. Colonel H.A. Johnstone) who arrived hot from SIGINT to attest to the horror of Berry's crime. Indeed he seemed unable to believe that such a thing had happened. "It would never enter my head to discuss SIGINT with the general public," he said. Gosh.

The trial's due this autumn (?), and there's a good chance of an acquittal - a corporal 7 years out of the army is unlikely to know anything vital that's not already published, and the case against Campbell is pure innuendo. The Aubrey/Berry/Campbell Defence Committee has been successful so far



in raising cash for the defence: write to c/o "Time Out", 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 for propaganda, badges, bags, T shirts.

But, you might ask, is there any real coherence in this sequence of events? Am I just not being paranoid? One persistent thread is the U.S. connection, the NSA dominance in SIGINT noted by Berry, Campbell, and Hosenball. The recent crash of a US U2 spyplane in Cyprus hints at its extent. Hosenball has also written of CIA influence in British politics, exposing CIA 'frontmen' like Robert Moss, now of the sinister and influential National Association for Freedom. Abroad its believed that the CIA engineered the downfall of the Australian Labour government - for endangering a SIGINT base. Curiously enough the Americans themselves don't seem too worried about revelations of their power - when Hosenball returned to the U.S. he was easily able to get security clearance as White House correspondent. But why should they worry? Its only 3rd rate powers like Britain that stand to lose prestige if its shown how little control they have over their

own destinies.

And SIGINT itself, important enough to sacrifice a government - but about which we still know very little. I'd guess that an examination of SIGINT's actions within the "free world" would be very interesting. A strong interest in SIGINT unites the people I've written about, and its clear from Colonel Johnstone's remarks that they'd rather remain out of public view. In his eyes the "enemy" Berry and Campbell were aiding was the British public, for whom he probably feels more antipathy than the Russian military, who he can at least understand. In fact the whole slant of the Official Secrets Act is against internal 'subversives' rather than foreign spies (whom its unlikely to stop) and its been largely successful in keeping knowledge of things like SIGINT minimal. Such a cloak of secrecy is likely to have bred incredible abuses of power, and the systematic vehemence directed at those who've challenged it shows a general fear of exposure.

So what can we do? All this talk of vast organisations and world powers can be very depressing for those of us who challenge them - but if they're so scared of exposure, that shows they can be hurt by further probing. Campbell, Agee, and Hosenball have been neutralised, but other journalists replace them, and, at a recent NUJ/NCCL conference they pledged themselves 'to publish and be banned'. Its up to the rest of us to help them.

Finally, it should be remembered that organisations like SIGINT are kept going by ordinary working people, who have a habit of standing up for themselves if they've had enough. "The Eavesdroppers" mentions a strike against the brutal and pointless bombing of North Vietnam by the NSA staff who guided the U.S. bombers, and NSA and CIA have produced "renegades" like Peck and Agee. But its John Berry who's probably the best example, a man who spent 5 years with SIGINT before turning his back on it to become a social worker among delinquent children. He was so enraged by the treatment of Agee and Hosenball that he put his freedom at stake by giving what information he had - which can't have been much. There are others like him, ordinary soldiers who have been politicised by what they've seen in the army, and there will be more, as long as soldiers are people, not robots. These are the ones whose knowledge and anger have most potential to knock down the whole oppressive structure.

Niall M.

TO BLAZES WITH

Although it could be a mistake to view any and every strike by groups of workers as having an inherent revolutionary value of its own, particularly if it's over differentials, the present fire-fighters' strike must surely be the latest in a succession of attempts by public sector workers to take on the government (and hence the state, the biggest employer of all) directly and challenge the so-called 'voluntary' wage restraint of 10%. The last three years of Labour government have seen big strikes by nurses, teachers and dustmen. Local government manual workers, health service workers: and ambulance workers have all put in claims above the 10% guideline. These workers are not traditionally militant and the fire-fighters are on strike for the first time in their sixty years existence.

As soon as the strike started the 'impartial' press and TV launched themselves into a massive anti-strike campaign. Mass regular viewing programmes like "Nationwide" carried out a consistent attack on the firefighters trying to depict them as aggressive and thug-like on the picket-line, while the press, playing on peoples' prejudices, labelled the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) as a "militant" union. Yet despite this public support for them has been widespread. As one fireman we spoke to put it: "The government never honestly thought that we would come out on strike. When we did come out on strike they thought it would only last three or four days. They thought that public opinion like the power workers would drive us back to work."

In the last eleven years there have been four major inquiries into the firemen's job and rates of pay, none of whose recommendations have been fully implemented. The most recent, the McCarthy Report, recommended that the firemen's rate of pay should be compared generally with all other jobs in the community and that they should be paid the 'average weekly adult male wage for manual workers plus 10%' which is what the firefighters are asking. The job is extremely dangerous — last year alone saw five firemen killed on duty and 340 seriously injured — and often entails working long hours. The increasing number of chemical incidents has meant the firefighters' job has become a more highly skilled one as well as hazardous.

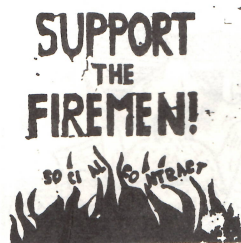
The government from the start have made their intentions clear.

Firemen told us:

"As far as the government is concerned they don't care how many people lose their lives".

The main function of the 10% pay limit (supposedly to keep down inflation) is basically to protect British capitalism as a whole. If the government can show foreign capital that it can keep wages down, particularly in the public sector, this encourage more investment in Britain (where the rate of exploitation will be consequently higher). Three years of wage restraint in Britain (in real terms a reduction in wages) has had little effect on the rate of inflation; it wasn't meant to, high inflation rates and high unemployment are not things peculiar to Britain but are symptoms of the crisis throughout the world.

Whether the firefighters are totally committed to breaking the 10% wage limit is a difficult question.



"People I've spoken to ... most of them are against the 10% guideline. It's just not on for most groups of low-paid workers", was one response. More recently there has been the demand from the executive of the FBU for the recall of the TUC to back a 'national campaign against the 10% pay "law"'. Yet there is a tendency among the more conservative to regard themselves as a "special case" and the particular nature of their job has reinforced this attitude.

The need to support the firefighters raises the question of uniting resistance within the public sector against the spending cuts. The struggles of public service workers for higher wages must be seen as part of the general resistance against the attack on the social wage of the working class, where low wages lead to difficulties in recruiting staff.

A victory for the firefighters against the imposed wage restraint would most likely result in a whole wave of pay increases for other groups of workers as has happened before. When the 4½% pay norm was enforced under the last Labour government in 1969, gains for the teachers, dustmen and miners came in

the context of a general working class fight against it.

It would be a mistake, however, to see the issue as purely one of wages, as the traditional left groups tend to, although in the immediate sense most of the firefighters probably regard wages as being more important than anything else. Beneath this though lie other grievances; long hours, hazardous conditions and the whole way their work is organised, with the hierarchy of fire officers above them. One fireman had this to say about the officers' job:

"The officers come on the scene when the fire has already been tackled. They're present in a purely supervisory capacity ... The most annoying thing about this whole strike is that NAFO (National Association of Fire Officers) are blokes who started the same as us. They should understand our case".

From a libertarian viewpoint it is important to realise that there have been big changes in attitudes towards the work since the beginning of the strike. Most firemen agree that 'the fire service will never be the same again'. Most of the fire officers have crossed picket lines and given advice to troops. A common opinion was:

"The problems with the Fire Brigade will only start when this strike finishes. The Fire Officers are going to say 'do this, do that' and we're either going to down tools or say 'bugger off!'"

Firefighters have been forced to think much more about the role of their work in capitalism; basically that of defending property. Firemen have always agreed to leave picket lines for rescue operations when life was in danger. The army have little experience in fighting fires and are certainly not equipped to save lives. Nevertheless the use of the army as a strike-breaking force is nothing new to the Labour government; they used them against the Glasgow dustcart drivers.

The government's biggest lie is that the army can cope: but if Shell's oil storage tanks at Aberdeen harbour caught fire there is only one fire tender which could tackle the blaze and only trained firefighters could operate it — the tender is lying in a bay at the King Street Fire Station and the firefighters are on strike.

For a group of workers not traditionally known for their militancy and surviving without strike pay their determination is impressive to say the least. Scottish firemen planned to picket all pits and docks to call for a day of strike action.

WAGE RESTRAINT

Bill Craig, Scottish Region FBU chairman, has said:

"We have let it be known that... we feel that the strike will not be won by lobbies of Parliament."

Despite the most recent decision taken by the FBU executive to try and end the 8-week old strike by recalling the delegate conference, the first reactions from branches in Strathclyde, South Yorkshire, Merseyside and Hampshire indicate that they are not prepared to give in.

For the strike to be successful, further strike action from other workers, probably against the instructions of their union bureaucracies, in sympathy with the firefighters in necessary. This could be the first step towards greater solidarity within the public sector as a whole

Guy Taylor

9/1/78

(The above was based on a short interview with the firefighters at the picket line in King Street, Aberdeen in December.)



Dear Solidarity for social revolution,

While I sympathise duals responding to t claim for a wage increase "special case", I did not see their strike as a struggle which a socialist organisation should have supported.

I think that their 30% claim would have wrecked the Government's Income Policy with its 10% guideline. There seems to be a widespread unexamined assumption that smashing the Incomes Policy would be a good thing, but I think that it amounts to a "transitional demand" i.e. it is a demand which the present social order cannot concede without destroying itself. And if wage demands do wreck the Incomes Policy then the majority of the workers involved will have brought about a change which they did not originally intend.

The likely outcome of uncontrolled inflation seems to be a change to a radically more authoritarian regime.

To say this is not to "prop up capitalism". The overthrow of capitalism is unlikely in the near future. If the present form of capitalism (deformed social democracy?) busts a gut then, given the present level of socialist awareness, it will certainly be replaced by another form of capitalism.

Did the Firefighters themselves want to smash the Incomes Policy? A recent leaflet says: "There are

LETTERS

Solidarity welcomes letters from readers



ways the Government could meet our claim without damaging the guideline."

I advocate an alternative strategy for all public service workers' pay campaigns (I am one myself, by the way.) While each group campaigns for its own "special case" in wage demands from the Government questions of wage equality and inequality are never raised. (There is an analogy with making demands on a father figure while leaving the responsibility totally in his hands.) I think that socialist consciousness and the conditions of the lower paid will both be advanced (under capitalism) if groups of workers are required to account to each other for wage inequality.

I am not sneering at those socialists who did support the Firefighters' struggle. Certainly, once you had decided to support them there were all kinds of valuable contacts that could be made on a continuing basis. (This is, however, a "spin-off"—not a reason to support a dispute you didn't agree with in the first place.)

Also people in claimants unions are doing a lot of good helping the Firefighters with their Social Security claims. If I was a claimant I would have actively supported this — helping the strikers as fellow claimants.

John Cowan

A PRISONERS AID GROUP is being formed by Cambridge Anarchists. They'd welcome donations of books for prisoners and names of prisoners who want books. Write Raf Salkie W14, Queens College Cambridge.

OUR PRINTERS.....
The printing of SOLIDARITY FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION will, where feasible, be rotated along with the editing and lay-out to the nearest community printer. This issue was printed by ABERDEEN PEOPLES PRESS, to whom many thanks for advice and facilities for lay-out. For information on APP's cheap printing service for left and community groups contact APP, 163 King St., Aberdeen. Tel Aberdeen (STD 0224) 29669.

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The strike at Highlands Fabricators Nigg yard in the spring of 1977 was noteworthy both for the ruthlessness displayed by the Company, and for the extremes of co-operation between management and Union officials in their attempts to end the strike. The Company advertised a non-existent strikers' mass meeting to sow confusion and disrupt the workers' organisation. The Unions flew the entire Shop Stewards Committee to London to be told by national officials that there must be a return to work - with all the plane fares paid for by Highlands Fabricators. Although it took place just under a year ago we think the story of the strike raises issues of sufficient importance to merit describing here.

Highlands Fabricators is jointly owned by 2 giant firms, Brown and Root of Houston and George Wimpey, and was formed specifically to build platforms for the North Sea oilfields, at Nigg on the Cromarty Firth in the north of Scotland. The shop floor workers, mainly but not exclusively men, are 100% unionised, largely through the Boilermakers, AUEW (Construction and Engineering sections), and EETPU. The workforce varies from around 800 to 2,000, being periodically boosted by the importation of considerable numbers of travelling workers, mainly from central Scotland. Workers are taken on and laid off according to the stage of the platform's construction. The platform building industry is currently depressed and if there is not another order to follow when one platform is completed, it's the dole for everyone.

In November 1976 the management pressed the Stewards Committee to sign a 'Declaration of Intent' on a productivity agreement designed to increase productivity by 40%. Under strong pressure from both management and the full-time officials the Committee by a majority agreed to sign the document without it ever being put to the workforce. The shop floor only learnt of the agreement for definite some weeks later when "Nigg Worker" (produced by Socialist Worker supporters), having 'obtained' a copy of the agreement, reproduced it in a bulletin circulated round the yard. The anger felt by many workers at this episode was to influence attitudes in the strike. In January 1977 an "Addendum" to the productivity agreement was signed under conditions of the greatest secrecy. Only the full-time officials and members of the Negotiating Committee of the Shop Stewards Committee ever saw copies of the document.

The immediate issue of the strike was a cut in the "Manhours Saved" (sic) part of the Platform Completion Bonus. This was paid according to the number of worker hours taken to build the platform, and was expected to be worth £600 to a skilled grade worker with a full attendance record since the

start of the platform. Few bonuses operate without severe disadvantages to the workers, but this one was particularly bad. It was extremely complicated and virtually impossible for the workers to monitor. Further, being dependent on reducing the number of worker hours spent on the job, it set up a conflict between fighting redundancies and keeping up the bonus level. Although some of the Stewards had their suspicions earlier, Highlands Fabricators gave no indication that the bonus was going to be lower than anticipated, until a sudden announcement on March 1st 1977.

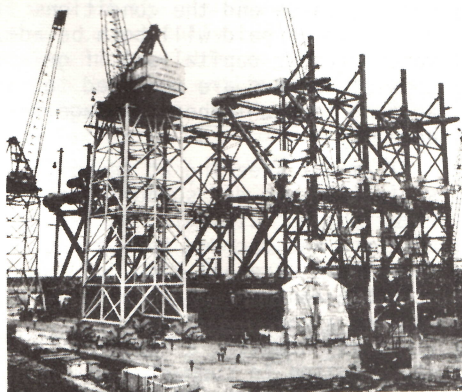
1st MARCH: Highlands Fabricators management ignore usual procedure by releasing new bonus figures to the workforce through the site foremen, without going through the Shop Stewards Committee. The bonus is now to be £200 instead of £600. The Stewards Committee meet and after considerable discussion decide unanimously to recommend strike action to the workforce. Mass meetings of each of the 3 shifts are held.

Why has the bonus been cut by two-thirds? The Company is to argue that it's because there has not been as many redundancies as expected. But why should workers have to choose between mass redundancies and a wage cut? Some allege that there has not been sufficient allowance made for design changes. There is evidence that poor management has held up the job. Bad communication between foremen, supervision who do not have sufficient knowledge of engineering. One shift would put up some fabrication - then the next shift would undo the work and do it again differently.

Most of the workforce seem to look on the situation as opposition to a wage cut - they had expected £600 and are only getting £200. By a substantial majority the workers vote for strike action. The strike starts at midnight.

2nd - 3rd MARCH: No outcome from talks involving shop stewards, full-time officials, and management.

4th MARCH: A mass meeting. The officials - Gray (AUEW), Lafferty (AUEW Construction), McCartney (Boilermakers), and Souza (EETPU) - argue that the workers should return to work to safeguard the yard's future. The stewards by a majority recommend the strike



The platform under construction shortly before the strike

continue. The workers vote unanimously to stay out.

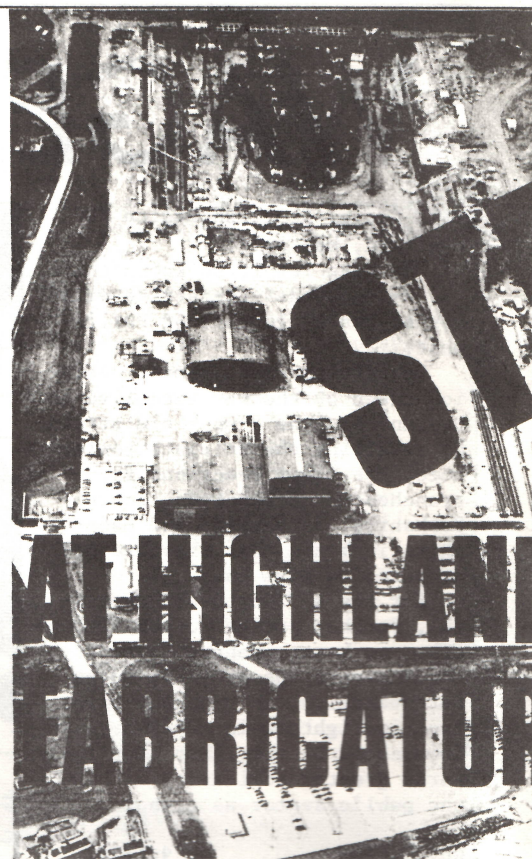
Over the next few days all workers at the yard receive threatening letters. The letters are from Highlands Fabricators, dated March 4th, and state that if the workforce stay on strike a new order being awarded by Chevron will be lost and the yard will be closed.

The threat was almost certainly phoney propaganda. All the evidence suggests that design work, ordering of materials, and other plans for the order were too far advanced for it to be cancelled without great difficulty. The industry orientated magazine "The Oilman" in its issue of 19th March, when the strike was still going strong, confidently predicted that Chevron's new order would still go to Highlands Fabricators.

5th MARCH: A large advert addressed to the Nigg workers appears in the local and national press. "We, National Officials of the following unions, instruct all our members to report back to work immediately" is the message from Boilermakers, AUEW, and EETPU officials. The Company's letter to the strikers, dated March 4th, advises them that an advert from their Union will be in the papers the next day - the ad appears to be a joint effort by the officials and Highlands Fabricators, with the Company paying the bill.

6th MARCH: The yard is open for a return to work. No-one returns to work.

7th MARCH: Rab Wilson, Convener of the Shop Stewards Committee, states in the press that the officials were wrong to place the ad in the papers - any decision to return to work could only be made by a mass meeting.





Highlands Fabricators' £25m fabrication yard at Nigg Bay

In pubs and shops all over the area posters appear advertising a mass meeting for the Nigg workforce at 8am the next day. The Energy Secretary Dickson Mabon informs STUC General Secretary Jimmy Milne that the government is anxious for an early return to work.

8th MARCH : Jimmy Milne, invited north by AUEW official Tommy Gray, the officials and hundreds of workers arrive for the meeting. However it transpires that no meeting has been called by the stewards, and that the extensive advertising for the meeting is the work of Highlands Fabricators management! Presumably their intention is to sow confusion amongst the strikers and weaken their organisation. However their plan backfires - the workers anger is directed at the Company.

In talks in Aberdeen involving Jimmy Milne, Highlands Fabricators managing director Kevin Barry, Chevron managing director Glen Shurman, 3 of the officials, and a delegation of 6 from the Stewards Committee, the Chevron representatives claim that if there is not a quick return to work Chevron will take their next rig away from Highlands Fabricators.

9th MARCH : The shop stewards, meeting to consider the report-back from the Aberdeen meeting, vote 10-6 to recommend a return to work, despite some stewards arguing that Chevrons' threats are a bluff.

10th MARCH : At the mass meeting convener Rab Wilson puts the majority view of the Stewards Committee that the strike should end because of the risk of losing the next order.

His speech is greeted by uproar. Workers shout "The shop stewards have got cold feet and sold us down the river" and "If we give way on this the next rig won't be worth having" Loud objections are made to a vote being taken in the absence of the travelling workers who have returned to their homes. After discussion the stewards agree to adjourn the meeting till March 15th to allow the travelling workers to be present.

15th MARCH : The convener once more puts the stewards recommendation for a return to work. By now many workers see the strike as one of principle, and consider the future balance of forces in the yard to be at stake - the productivity deal is there waiting to be implemented. The workforce votes by a small majority to stay out.

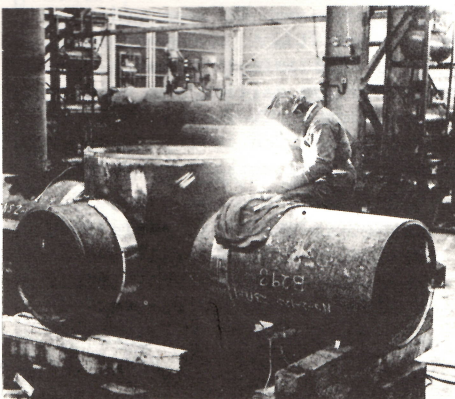
21st MARCH : At the request of AUEW (Const.) official Baldwin Highlands Fabricators pay for the entire Shop Stewards Committee to be flown to London to meet national officials. Urged by the officials to recommend a return to work to another mass meeting, the stewards refuse. Baldwin presses for the opportunity to himself address a mass meeting of the workforce. The stewards agree.

23rd MARCH : Tommy Lafferty, AUEW Construction official, states on TV that the yard will close unless the workforce vote the next day to return to work.

24th MARCH : At the mass meeting Baldwin, speaking on behalf of his national executive, states that the workforce must end the strike or the yard will close. After a rowdy meeting, the vote is confused but Baldwin announces a majority for a return to work, and immediately jumps off the platform to leave. He is surrounded, jostled and pinned against a barbed wire fence by angry workers. Police intervene and escort him to a waiting car.

25th MARCH : Police are present at the yard gates as the workforce returns to work.

In the negotiations following the return to work the "Manhours Saved" bonus was fixed at £197, and a new component worth £192 was added to the bonus. Since the £192 barely



Working in one of the fabrication shops at Nigg

covered wages lost during the strike the outcome, in financial terms, was certainly a defeat.

The strike was noteworthy for the ruthlessness of Highlands Fabricators management. They had no qualms about threatening to close the yard, putting 1,500 workers on the dole. Their move in advertising a non-existent mass meeting would not have disgraced ex-President Nixon's Dirty Tricks Department. The threat of the yard's closure is always likely to be used by Highlands Fabricators - they have stated in the past that there is not much at Nigg that could not be packed up and floated away, and they have always refused to give the Local Authority any guarantee about the life of the yard. This is similar to the situation in the oil industry generally. The Companies' concern is with short term profitability. When the "boom" is over they can always pack up and go off to make money elsewhere in the world.

The other side of Highlands Fabricators strike strategy was their close co-operation with the Trade Union officials and official T.U. structure - against the workforce. From the very start of the strike the management and the officials shared the same immediate objective - for the workforce to return to work immediately without insisting on any prior concessions by the Company. To achieve this they worked closely together in such moves as the press adverts and flying the stewards to London.

This co-operation between management and officials against the wishes of the workforce occurs constantly at Highlands Fabricators. In interviews with shop stewards and other workers we were told repeatedly that the officials worked much more closely with management than they did with the shop stewards, and that in disputes the officials had a definite tendency to side with management. Shop stewards described how management used the officials - if they were putting forward a controversial proposal they would first contact the officials and informally work out a deal with them. Then when the management's proposal was put to the shop stewards committee the management and officials would present a united front for its acceptance. We were also told by many workers of other close ties between management and officials. They alleged that when visiting the area for negotiations the 4 officials - Gray, Lafferty, McCartney, and Souza - frequently stayed overnight in accommodation paid for by the company, either in the camp at Nigg or in a hotel. Workers also alleged that officials, particularly Lafferty and McCartney, were often to be seen socialising and drinking with management.

This collusion between management

Continued next page

HIGHLANDS FABRICATORS Contd. from p.9.

and Trade Union officialdom is a central feature of employment today, in both the private and state sectors. Just as the Labour government uses the TUC General Council to hold back rank and file trade unionists nationally, so 'progressive' managements use the local full time officials to keep their employees in check. In many situations workers are now too strongly organised to be smashed into submission in open battle - its more effective to have them stabbed in the back by people who are supposed to be their allies. The T.U. hierarchy may often believe that they are acting in the best interests of workers, but they become remote from the experiences and beliefs of the rank and file and, constantly mixing with management and government representatives, they acquire some power and influence in the capitalist system. The T.U. structure they are working within accepts the system's priorities of profitability and the need for "orderly industrial relations". T.U. officialdom is now an integral

mass meetings. On the other hand they can become divorced from the workforce generally and have on occasions, such as over the productivity deal, acted to keep information and decision making power away from the shop floor. The Nigg situation seems similar to what is happening nationally. There is a tendency for Shop Stewards Committees to become incorporated into the official T.U. structure, but with a conscious and militant workforce it is a tendency which could be reversed.

An outstanding feature of the dispute was the militancy and independence shown by the workforce in several times rejecting the officials and shop stewards calls for a return to work. Workers told us that among those most involved in the strike were many local workers (usually considered less militant than the travelling workers) and many who had previously not been much involved in union issues. It is interesting that this militancy was displayed without the workforce containing any politically organised groups of

there is bound to be more conflict in the future as Highlands Fabricators compete for orders in a depressed market. The platform building companies are increasingly having to tender for contracts on a fixed price basis. This puts greater pressure on them to reduce their costs - and the workers are first in line to be squeezed.

The great danger is that in the scramble for orders the workers in the different yards will be played off against each other. A first step towards fighting this would be a re-vitalisation of the Oil Liaison Committee, a body which up till November 1977 regularly drew together representatives of the Stewards Committees of the platform building yards in Scotland and North England. Strong links need to be made between the workers in the different yards, not only within Britain but throughout Europe, so that there can develop a co-ordinated fight, controlled by the rank and file, to protect and improve working conditions, and in the longer



Strikers mass meeting - Convener Rab Wilson speaks to the workforce

part of the capitalist system - positive change can only come from the mass of working people.

At the beginning of the dispute the Shop Stewards Committee were fighting against the cut in the bonus along with the workforce as a whole, and came out in criticism of such moves as the Officials' adverts in the press. After a week of the dispute however the majority of the Committee started pressing for a return to work, and in the later stages of the strike the Committee allowed themselves to be used in the officials' attempts to railroad the workforce back to work. In the yard generally the Stewards Committee are genuine representatives of the workforce in that they are directly elected by the shop floor, remain workers at the yard, and can be mandated through

significant size or influence. Unfortunately evidence suggests that the strikes' defeat caused some demoralisation. A short time later when the platform had been finished and work on the new Chevron order had yet to get fully underway, the management were able to greatly reduce the workforce by calling for voluntary redundancies. There was no organised opposition to this and surprisingly many workers - around 480 - volunteered.

Nevertheless there is little doubt that the length of the strike and the determination shown by a large section of the workforce worried Highlands Fabricators, and augurs well for future struggles. Since the strike there has been conflict over productivity proposals (which we've not the space to describe here) and

run to fundamentally challenge the power and priorities of the giant oil industry companies. Mike V.

We are very grateful to the workers at Highlands Fabricators who gave up their time to talk to us and give information about the issues reported here. Many thanks also to those people who helped in the research who are not members of Solidarity. The responsibility for the contents and politics of the article does of course lie completely with Solidarity. Acknowledgements also to the following publications which were consulted in the research: Cromarty - the scramble for oil by G. Rosie; Nigg Worker, published by Socialist Worker supporters, Nigg. We would welcome comments on the article and further information about the situation at Nigg from workers at the yard.

Scottish Womens Liberation Conference

Womens Liberation conferences have been organised along similar lines for several years now, but there have been increasing feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration with national conferences in particular. The 'old' method of organisation was that the planning group received suggestions for workshops which they arranged on the timetable as best they could, so that there were always a large number of choices and range of subjects.

After the last national conference a paper was circulated on the role of the WL national conference - the suggestions which were made included:

- a) campaigns which have their own conferences and structures e.g. Womens Aid and the National Abortion Campaign, should not take up workshop time at national conferences. There could be stalls set up to pass on information about these campaigns.
- b) skills exchange, e.g. car maintenance and silk-screen printing, would be better done on a local level.
- c) social events should be restricted to the Saturday evening. A womens festival could be organised at a different time.
- d) there should be a few issues isolated for really deep discussion.
- e) the issues should be discussed in small groups which would stay together for the whole conference. Some system of random allocation should be used to form the groups.

Since these suggestions were made there has not been another national conference, so there is no indication of how the new method will work with around 3000 women. However, at least two smaller conferences have tried the system of staying in the same small, randomly chosen groups for the whole conference and limiting the number of subjects discussed.

One of these was the Scottish WL conference held in December in St Andrews, which about 100 women attended.

Three topics had been chosen for discussion, these were:

- 1) Separatism.
 - 2) How does the Womens Liberation Movement feel about the socialist current within itself?
 - 3) Women and violence.
- These topics were discussed with particular reference to "What are

good strategy and tactics for a feminist revolution?" The conference divided up into small, randomly chosen groups of about 10 women. Most women stayed in the same group for the three sessions.

In the first session on separatism there was more agreement than I had expected. Very few women in Scotland identify themselves as separatist, and there are many women: heterosexual, bisexual, and lesbian, who totally disagree with the separatist standpoint of completely excluding men from their lives. A lot of women thought that separatist communes were useful as a haven for women to escape to for short periods or as an example that



shows that we can live without men if we choose, but did not agree that separatism was the way to revolution. The discussion also highlighted the confusions which exist between separatism, lesbian feminism as a political choice, and lesbianism as a sexuality issue. It is interesting to note that most of the separatists who were at the conference did not take part in the discussions but met in their own group throughout the conference.

The discussion on the socialist current in the womens movement revealed a lot of confusion about the meaning of socialism and anarchism, those of us who mean the same thing by both words probably confused matters even more (do we need a new word?). There seems to be a lot of fear in the movement that the Socialist Feminists are going to put across the "Party line" and recruit us all to their male dominated groups.

This may have been the case a couple of years ago but it isn't now: a lot of socialist feminists are non-aligned or are dissatisfied with the left groups they have been in contact with and a few are libertarian socialists. During this discussion most groups talked

about which came first: capitalism or patriarchy, and if one falls will the other follow. A lot of women at the conference seemed to agree that both must be fought together, it was no good fighting one and hoping the other would go away.

The workshop on women and violence seemed to be the one at which most differences arose. Some women felt that violence was a very "male" way of organizing and whereas we must learn to defend ourselves, using violence as a strategy was aping a male stereotype we were seeking to destroy. But other women felt that as violence was conditioned out of us we should fight against that conditioning and become more aggressive. This of course resulted in discussion of how far you could take self-defence (if one woman is raped is it self-defence for a group of women to go and attack that man?). There was also a discussion on the difference between violence against people and violence against property.

On the whole it was a good

conference but for me it was marred by two events. One was the hysterical attitude of the St. Andrews Student Union officials who had refused to duplicate some of the conference documents because they said some of the words were offensive (words like brothel, homosexual, and masturbation which can be found in most dictionaries and most student rag-mags). The other was the equally hysterical attitude of some separatist women who objected to the presence of a male child in the disco.

The next Scottish Womens Liberation Conference will be held in Edinburgh in September; there will also be a Scottish Women's Festival in Edinburgh one weekend in June. The next national Womens Liberation conference will be held in Birmingham in April.

Nina Woodcock

'ZERO' is an anarchist/anarcha-feminist newsmagazine produced monthly by a mixed collective. It can be obtained at 20p per issue (or £3 sub) from ZERO, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N.1.

About four years ago I dropped out of the Womens' Liberation Movement (WLM), feeling rather disillusioned with what I felt to be the movement's loss of direction and dilution of revolutionary content. From my experiences at National Conferences, I defined three strands, none of which I felt I fitted into. The first was characterised by a growth of mindless hostility to all things superficially associated with the male. This covered just about everything that could be fitted under the label of culture and also much that couldn't. This was replaced with glorification of womens' culture instead, as in the new goddess cult. Lesbianism was encouraged, not so much from the need to fulfill an erotic desire, as from a desire to escape from what was seen as the inevitable hassles of a male/female relationship.

"In fact, it is my contention that feminists have been unconscious anarchists in both theory and practice for years. We now need to become consciously aware of the connections between anarchism and feminism and use that framework for our thoughts and actions."

In it she makes the connection between radical feminist practice and anarchist theory.

"When we say we are fighting the patriarchy, it isn't always clear to all of us that that means fighting all hierarchy, all leadership, all government, and the very idea of authority itself. Our impulses toward collective work and small leaderless groups have been anarchistic, but in most cases we haven't called them by that name. And that is important, because an understanding of feminism as anarchism could spring-board women out of reformism and

intellectual tools that may aid understanding and increase knowledge, such as analysis and theory, because of their traditional use by men.

"KNOWLEDGE and ARGUMENT as it relates to women is so conspicuously alien to our interests that female irreverence for the intellectual arts is rarely concealed."

Denied of the use of these tools in the past by men, we are now to be deprived of their use by feminists and are told to rely on those traditional female attributes (so-called), "...wits and instincts". Whatever the feminism of this pamphlet is, it has little connection with anarchism.

I arrived at the conclusion that Anarchist-Feminism was no more than the vague expression of a feeling that the two bear some similarity in organisation. (E.g. small autonomous, sometimes federated, affinity

ANARCHISM AND FEMINISM

A second strand of socialist (i.e. Leninist-Trotskyists etc.) feminists had as little to offer. They mostly imitated the predominantly male Leninist political organisations, with their rigid hierarchical power structures and vanguardist attitudes. Now the WLM has lost its popularity as a fertile recruiting ground for the left and has been replaced in that role by the black movement.

The third strand revolved around reformist campaigns using acceptable channels of protest. Thus demanding the state fill the statute book with impressive, but mostly useless and non-enforceable legislation, such as the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.

So I returned, unrepentant, but cynical to the bosom of my male comrades, to concentrate on the advance of the libertarian revolution, from my isolated but nevertheless feminist perspective. But recently events within the WLM have again caught my attention and given me hope anew. The first indications of something new and interesting, as usual came from America. The first of these fell into my hands in 1976 called "Anarchism - the Feminist Connection" by Peggy Kornegger, in which she states:

stopgap measures into a revolutionary confrontation with the basic nature of authoritarian politics."

These ideas caught on in the WLM in Britain, where they were discussed at a National Conference workshop early in 1977. From this, the "Anarchist-Feminist Newsletter" was launched to replace the defunct and always ailing "Libertarian Womens' Network Newsletter".

Two more pamphlets, American reprints, published in Britain by Black Bear, came my way. The first "Anarcho-Feminism: Two Statements". The second and better of the two statements is alas overshadowed by the former ill-considered, histrionic 'Manifesto', that owes little to any real understanding of the meaning of anarchism, or indeed reality. For example:

"Anarchism indicates what people should not do to one another. Socialism, on the other hand, means all the groovy things people can do and build together..."

The second pamphlet, "Feminism as Anarchism" by Lynne Farrow, is not much of an improvement. She rejects the use of any

groups, made up of individuals and without formal hierarchies, whose main aim is the overthrow of patriarchy/authority by 'spontaneous' direct-action.) Though this is indeed the case, the organisational link alone does not make feminism anarchism, though correct it does not go far enough.

In November 1977, I attended my first regional Anarchist-Feminist Conference. These were some of the topics we discussed:

How being anarchists makes us different from other feminists.

The role of anarcho-feminists in the anarchist movement as a whole.

The Man Problem - working with anarchist/sympathetic men ... is it worth it?

Rape - what are the alternatives to calling for higher sentences for rapists?

Violence - anarcho-feminist responses to fascism?

I had always found womens' conferences lively and stimulating and this was no exception. I cannot claim to have

had the cynic inside me eradicated, that would have been to expect too much which is not in the character of a cynic. However, the depths of cynicism I had reached during this most reactionary decade, following from the perhaps naive, but gloriously ebullient 60's, was undeniably lightened. The most positive theme for me to come out of the conference, was the need to re-define anarchism from a feminist perspective that does not negate the tradition of anarchism as a continually developing historical and social movement.

Following the conference, the postman delivered another pamphlet: "Socialism, Anarchism and Feminism by Carol Ehrlich, again from America. This has helped to raise my spirits further. Every anarchist, every feminist, and every anarcho-feminist should read this pamphlet. Carol does the best job of analysing the WLM I have read (though it's the American movement it is still very similar in Britain). She exposes the absurdities of the new mystic-

a matriarchy will end the oppression of everyone. The goal then is not to "seize" power, as the socialists are fond of urging, but to abolish power."

Carol recommends situationism as a way forward for anarchist feminists, because:

"...it combines a socialist awareness of the primacy of capitalist oppression with an anarchist emphasis upon transforming the whole of public and private life".

She goes on to explain the situationist concepts of 'commodity' and 'spectacle' and how these are especially applicable to women. Her main success is in

"...showing women's situation as an organic part of the society as a whole, but at the same time without playing socialist reductionist games. Women's oppression is part of the over-all oppression of people by a capitalist economy, but it is not less than the oppression of others."

essential tasks in the building of a new and truly human world, and to this anarchists add a fourth essential task and the hardest of all to smash all forms of domination... It means that we have to do more than react in programmed rebellions - we must act. And our actions will be collectively taken while each person acts autonomously."

What then are we to do? I don't know and Carol alas doesn't say, except that we should challenge the 'spectacle' by 'creating situations'. I'm not sure what that means and having once shared a flat with situationists can only draw on their example. Which was to make everyone else in the flat miserable and drive themselves insane. I doubt that this is quite what Carol has in mind.

What I found refreshing about this pamphlet, is the lack of female chauvinism, which characterises much that has come from the WLM, and that I personally find equally as oppressive as its male counterpart and just as depressing.

Also, for me, Carol has helped expose the tenuous, contradictory and almost symbiotic relationship, that has grown up both within the WLM (between the radical feminists and socialist feminists), and externally, between the WLM and the socialist movement. In which, class domination and sex domination formed an uneasy alliance, behind which they competed on the scale for most oppressed, with neither side really accepting the others credentials. This forgets that both sex and class are merely abstract categories while both are experienced integrally within people's real lives. The vast majority of us suffer from some form of oppression in our daily lives, as a result of society being organised on the basis of inequality and domination, in which any real control over the means of life is denied us.

Sheila D. Ritchie

Recommended pamphlets

'Socialism, Anarchism and Feminism' Carol Ehrlich, from Compendium, 240 Camden High St., London NW1 65p inc. p&p.

'Anarchism - the Feminist Connection', Peggy Kornegger, from Black Bear, 76 Peckham Rd, London SE5. 30p inc. post ; or in duplicated form from Alison Malet, 17 Lorimer St, Dundee. 17p inc. post.

'Anarchist Feminist Newsletter' can be obtained by women only, subscription £1 from S.Laws, 43 Grosvenor Terr., Bootham, York.

South East London Anarchist
Feminist Group and friends



(Photo: Zero)

al cults, the disillusioning and reformist trap of electoral politics for socialists, and the dangers inherent in feminist-capitalism. She then goes on to discuss the value of anarchism to feminists as a revolutionary theory.

"There are, then, many issues on which radical feminists and anarchist feminists agree. But anarchist feminists are concerned with something more. Because they are anarchists, they work to end all power relationships, all situations in which people can oppress each other. Unlike some radical feminists who are not anarchists, they do not believe that power in the hands of women could possibly lead to a non-coercive society. And unlike most socialist feminists, they do not believe that anything good can come out of a mass movement with a leadership elite. In short, neither a workers' state, nor

She also shows how individual acts of rebellion cannot effectively change society.

"Rebellious acts, then tend to be acts of opposition to the spectacle, but seldom are so different that they transcend the spectacle."

Therefore

"...personal solutions to problems of sexist oppression such as 'live communally ...don't have children', have children 'but get parent and worker-controlled child care' or 'develop the lesbian within you ... develop your proletarian identity', are all partial solutions to much broader problems, and none of them necessarily require seeing the world in a qualitatively different way."

So what is the answer?

"Destroy capitalism. End Patriarchy. Smash Heterosexism. All are obviously

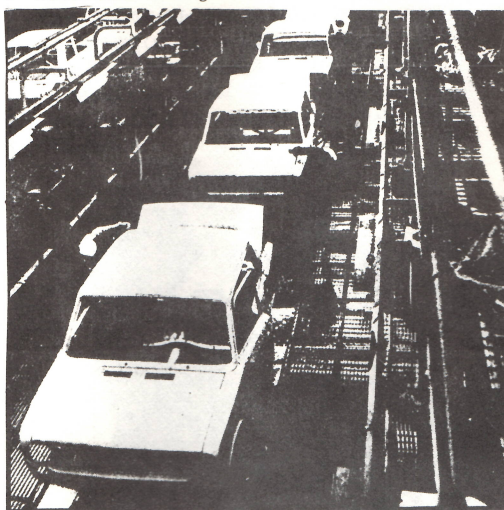
THE MONOLITH CRACKS

The last decade has seen the solid, totalitarian monolith that was the Stalinist states of Eastern Europe begin to crack under severe pressure from an increasingly combative and self confident working class. The decade began with a revolt in the Soviet town of Pryluky sparked off by the arrest and beating to death of a factory worker. It ended with a strike by Rumanian miners against food shortages and changes in the pension laws which would have meant a reduction in income, and for improved working conditions, a 6-hour day and the abolition of compulsory unpaid labour. During the strike the miners arrested two members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

On October 10, 15,000 people marched through Vilnius, Lithuania, overturning and setting fire to police cars and tearing down banners celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. During the decade Poland has seen student demonstrations in 1968 and riots against rises in the price of food in 1970 and again in 1976. In Hungary, Miklos Haraszti was put on trial for writing 'A Worker in a Workers' State', a brilliant exposure of the "desert of piece rates" in which the bureaucracy forces the working class to dwell. Czechoslovakia has seen the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact crush its attempt to break out of the Soviet orbit and more recently the suppression of the supporters of the Charter 77 Human Rights Manifesto and of anti-establishment rock groups like The Plastic People. In Rumania there have been strikes by miners in 1972 and 1977 and the formation of a Human Rights Movement around the figure of the writer Paul Goma. Even the most-stalinist of the East European states, the GDR and Bulgaria, have not remained unaffected. The former has seen the exile of the dissident poet and folk-singer Wolf Biermann, riots by young people during the 28th anniversary of the foundation of the GDR and the arrest (on a charge of spying for the West) of Rudolf Bahro, author of a dissident marxist work, 'The Alternative'. In Bulgaria there have been strikes by workers and demonstrations by students after the imprisonment of a group which had produced a pamphlet criticising the regime from a libertarian viewpoint. Nor has the foundation of the monolith, the USSR, escaped this wave of revolt. Strikes like those at Dniprodzerzhinsk, Odessa and Kiev, activities directed against Russification by national minorities which in Geor-

gia has taken the form of a bombing campaign and a veritable flood of samizdat literature have disturbed the social equilibrium the bureaucracy has tried so carefully to preserve.

Nor is this activity merely democratic nationalist or dissident marxist. On May Day 1967 a red and black flag was run up on the tower of a village church in the Skole district of the Ukraine. The police arrested a number of young people they alleged were responsible. On route to the village of Krushelnyze they were freed by a group of armed men. There is however a negative aspect to the growth of dissent - the rise of neo-fascist groupings like the Anton Fitsov Group in Moscow, the Russian Patriots and the journal 'Veche'.



THE FIAT ASSEMBLY LINE AT TOGLIATTIGRAD

It is beyond doubt that the societies of Eastern Europe are societies of oppression and exploitation, wherein the bureaucracy, and the bureaucracy alone, disposes of the wealth created by the sweat and muscle of the working class. Societies where class struggle is inevitably violent, for in these societies the unions and the "workers'" parties which in the West act as a buffer between rulers and ruled are blatantly part of the state apparatus.

As the Polish dissidents Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski wrote in their 'Open Letter to the Party':

"In our system the Party elite is at one and the same time also the power elite, all decisions relating to state power are made by it and, in any case at the top of the Party and state hierarchies, there exists as a rule a fusion of responsible posts. By exercising state power, the Party elite has at its disposal all the nationalised means of production; it decides on the extent of accumulation and consumption, on the direction

of investment, on the share of various social groups in consumption and the national income; in other words, it decides on the utilisation and distribution of the entire social product. The decisions of the elite are independent, free of any control on the part of the working class....."

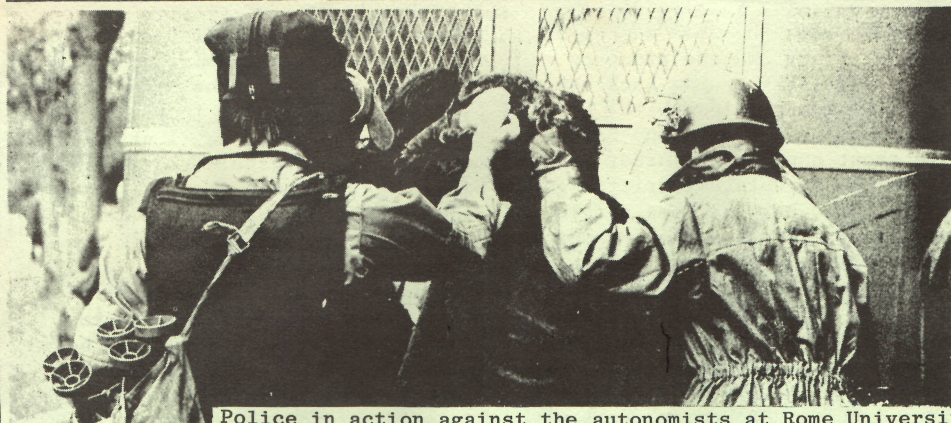
Although there are differences, in essence Eastern state capitalism is the same as Western monopoly capitalism. As Stalin admitted in his 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR', production is commodity production not production for use. On the recommendation of the economist Lieberman, Kosygin at a plenum of the Central Committee held in 1968 stressed that profit and the quota of profit should be used as the best means of inducing enterprises to increase their productivity.

Ever since the Revolution of 1917 Western capitalists have seen the USSR as a lucrative market. Indeed it was Western capital which financed Lenin's New Economic Policy. More recently the United States alone has supplied nuclear reactors to Czechoslovakia, railway equipment to Bulgaria and synthetic rubber plants to the USSR. With a loan of \$2½million the Polish government constructed the Lenin steel works which was opened by the US ambassador. The ball bearings necessary for the Soviet missile system are manufactured with machinery supplied by the US. With a credit from the US Commodity Credit Corporation the USSR purchased American wheat valued at \$750million. This purchase sent food prices in the US rocketing. In April 1974 Japanese and US firms concluded an agreement with the USSR providing \$1billion in credit for joint exploration for natural gas in Yakutsk.

With a credit of \$322million Fiat built the giant car plant at Togliattigrad. A £200million loan from the Export Credit Guarantees Department backs up British participation in the Kama River truck plant project. The West German Thyssen-Mannesmann company has provided the USSR with a gas pipe line on a credit of DM 1.2 billion. Why might one ask is Western capitalism pouring money into the economy of its supposed arch-enemy? The answer is simple: capitalism has become an integrated world economy which is becoming increasingly crisis-ridden.

For the workers of E. Europe this means total lack of control over their daily lives, total domination of their existence by the managerial bureaucracy backed

Continued at bottom of next column



Police in action against the autonomists at Rome University

State clampdown

Over the past 3 months the Italian state has launched a series of attacks on peoples right to organise politically and to demonstrate.

On 7th November Cossiga, Minister of the Interior, ordered the closure of 3 political and social centres of the left. 100 police, with guns and armoured cars, moved in to close the main office of the "Autonomous Workers Committee" in Rome. The "Cangaceiros" proletarian youth circle in Turin, a centre for young workers and unemployed, and another "Autonomous Workers" office in Rome were shut down the same day. No evidence of criminal activity was given to justify the closures. Meanwhile, open centres of fascist groups are left untouched. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) quickly declared its support for these measures taken by the Christian Democrat government, and urged that further action be taken against such "subversives".

A demonstration was organised against the closures in Rome for November 12th. The government banned it. Thousands defied the ban and were attacked by police using tear gas on a massive scale, driving vehicles at high speed into the crowd and on several occasions opening fire with machine guns and pistols. However, the protestors' tactics of organising 8 decentralised demonstrations in different areas of the city made the police repression more difficult and an effective protest was made.

December 2nd, the day of the Metal Workers' Union (FLM) national

strike and demo in Rome, saw armed riot police surround the University where the "autonomist" groups were assembling before marching to join the demonstration. Firing tear gas bombs at all the campus exits, the police physically prevented the autonomists leaving the University and arrested and beat up those who did slip out.

More brutal yet were the police actions of December 12th. Plans were made to demonstrate in Rome in commemoration of the people killed by a Fascist bomb in Milan in 1969 and to protest at the dragging out of the trial of the Fascists and government ministers involved. Once more the right to assemble and march was refused. The police attacked the demonstration, arrested 200 people, and imprisoned them in a gymnasium in a police barracks. They then fired tear gas into the gymnasium. The effect in a crowded, enclosed space can be imagined. In addition, people were badly beaten. One woman, 4 months pregnant, was hit so brutally that she lost her child through a forced abortion.

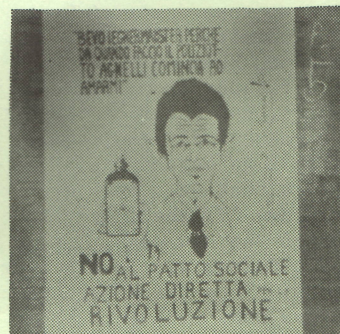
Five days later feminists demonstrated against the police brutality marching through the centre of Rome chanting "Now there are the flying squad men who can give you an illicit abortion" and (referring to the PCI leader), "Enrico never forget, you won't make your compromise on our skins". The trade unions have issued a statement condemning the police violence. Following the protests the Rome police

No overtime!

In a struggle that has much relevance to Britain, mass pickets of Fiat workers in Turin, Italy have defeated the Company's attempts to increase production on the cheap.

The new Fiat 127, now being extensively advertised in Britain, has been selling well. So Fiat decided to increase output in October and November by having the 127 line at their Turin factory work overtime for six successive Saturdays. The workers refused. With over 7% of the working population unemployed the workers stated that if Fiat wanted more cars they should employ more people. The workers organized mass pickets outside the factory, starting at dawn, for each of the six Saturdays. No one worked overtime on any of the days.

The workforce has won a significant victory, and the same fight has been taken up by others, such as the workers at Alfa Romeo near Milan.



Italian anarchist poster.

A parody of a well known advert, i has PCI leader Berlinguer, saying "I DRINK IEGHERMAISTER BECAUSE SINCE I'M ACTING AS A POLICEMAN AGNELLI (the Fiat owner) IS BEGINNING TO LOVE ME" Below it reads - NO TO THE SOCIAL PACT DIRECT ACTION FOR REVOLUTION

Thanks to Peoples News Service and an Italian comrade for the information for these articles. Mike V.

chief, Migliorini, has been dismissed by the government.

With the workers' militancy having forced the trades unions to call a one day general strike for mid-January, the coming year looks set to bring more fierce conflict in Italy.

Continued from page 14 .

up by the State's terror. It means obeying orders without question, it means austerity and shortages of basic goods and services, it means going without the limited freedoms enjoyed by workers in the West, it means paying hypocritical lip-service to official myths which no one, not even those who perpetrate them, really believes. As Harasti writes: 'He who sells his time, his

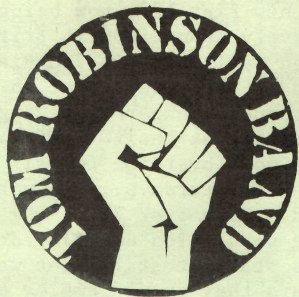
strength, his abilities for wages, whether bit by bit for piece rates or in a more transparent total form, knows that he doesn't work for himself. He knows that he has sold everything, including the right to determine how much he produces.' Eastern capitalism can no more be reformed than can Western capitalism. It is the conscious, independent, world revolutionary action of the working class in its

struggle for socialist self-management of the economy and the totality of life which will destroy it. The Workers' Councils of 1956 and the above-mentioned strikes point the way ahead. The path they have opened up is the path we must now follow.



T. Liddle

TRB



1977, when the two sevens clashed: punk rock exploded and gave a new sense of purpose to rock music, with a new generation of bands blasting off into the unknown. Different bands took different directions: while some like the (heavily sexist) Stranglers took regressive stances, others struggled up toward artistic and political commitment. Bands like the Clash and Sham 69 developed defiant attitudes from tough experiences, but their commitment was to a vague individualism which didn't go beyond their immediate situation. Time drew on and by autumn '77 the energy had gone out of the new wave, commercial forces were containing the revolt. Thus the emergence of a fresh new band much more politically mature than anything to date, was treated with disbelief and gratitude; the Tom Robinson Band were on their way.

I was lucky enough to see them a few weeks back and I was suitably impressed. Tom, who sings lead and plays bass, is hardly a punk, having been involved in mainstream pop for a few years before, but he was inspired by the Sex Pistols to form a hard rock band. A fine band it is too, working in the solid British tradition of melodic pop/rock epitomised by the Kinks, with some particularly outstanding tough guitar work from Danny Kustow. But it's Tom's lyrics which are unique. Like the punks, he writes from personal experience, but that experience is of being gay, and of finding how hard life can be as part of a despised minority - not least at the hands of the police and other "decent citizens".

The song "Glad to be Gay" is a long catalogue of queer-bashing (not least by the old bill) and horrific insults from Tory MP's. Tom spits the lyrics with the force of his anger over a jogging piano in the "Cabaret" manner;

despite the title it's not a happy song. Tom is also deeply concerned with the rise of the National Front and the prospect of a general right-wing backlash. His finest song (along with "Glad") is "Winter of '79", a long narrative about how law and order breaks out on the streets, minorities go to the wall, but the same people as before come out on top - sung over a dramatic backdrop with suitably moody organ and guitars: "A few of us fought, and a few of us died/in the winter of '79". Other songs, fast rockers with titles like "We Ain't Gonna Take It" and "Long Hot Summer" deal with the need to stand together and fight against such a threat. Other songs deal with more specific themes, such as his version of Dylan's "I Shall Be Released" for George Ince, framed for armed robbery; and "Don't Take No for an Answer", about the seamy side of the music business. Tom emphasizes his message with some neat dramatics - in "Power in the Darkness" he imitates a rabid Tory denouncing gays, wogs, etc. to such effect that he felt the need to remind us twice that he was only joking - presumably some lobotomised twerp somewhere had actually thought he meant it. His set was also well-paced, moving from light pieces like the hit single "2468 Motorway" (a great singalongatom

(though he'd side with them against the right), on the quite valid grounds that they don't really care about personal politics, which Tom considers the most important kind. This only increases my admiration for Tom, but I still have my worries about the direction he's headed. These come down to Tom's avowed desire to be a star. While his honesty is admirable, I'm scared he might end up a "product", passively consumed by his audience, with whom effective communication would cease. This was already beginning to happen when I saw him; the audience went berserk over "Motorway" but a lot of them didn't seem to be interested in much else, and seemed disappointed that all the numbers weren't harmless pop songs. They didn't even get angry, which would at least have been a reaction. And then there's the contract with EMI, which has already produced one hit, but which might become a millstone if they start to censor the material; the choice would then be integrity or serious risk to his career. And there's the more abstract matter of the music itself: while Tom's lyrics are radical, his music is essentially very conservative, if excellent, rock music. It might sound good coming out of a radio, it might be good to dance to, but it doesn't really challenge, disorient, make you think. The lyrics might be good, but the



number), through the epic "Glad to be Gay" and "'79", to end with exhilarating rockers like "Power" and "Up Against the Wall" (his tribute to the punks), leaving the audience in a positive and (hopefully) militant mood. In fact Tom's whole attitude to the audience is a refreshing contrast to the macho posturing of most rock performers (including punks) - he treats the fans like friends. And what other band produces a free bulletin telling what they're up to, including info. on abortion, Release, etc.?

Naturally, the left has gone bananas over Tom, but in a recent interview he personally disassociated himself from them

average rock fan doesn't listen to them too closely, particularly at a concert. As it is, only two songs transcend the formula, "Glad to be Gay" and "'79", both of which have striking and imaginative arrangements, but are not the kind of stuff Tony Blackburn would play. "Glad" has a good enough tune to be successful as a single, plays or no, so I hope he persuades EMI to release it, and soon. It should be out by the time you read this (fingers crossed). If it works, we could be in for some great, committed music, and if it doesn't work, well, Tom's already done enough to amply justify himself. Well, here's hoping.....

Niall M.